

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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For Immediate Release

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Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on May 20, 2005, **PHILIP H. COHN**, age 42, of St. Louis, Missouri, was sentenced before the United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, East St. Louis, Illinois, to sixty (60) months' imprisonment, and five (5) years' supervised release. The Court also ordered **PHILIP H. COHN** to pay \$ 347,200.38 restitution to East St. Louis, Illinois, School District 189.

PHILIP H. COHN pled guilty on December 6, 2004, to Counts 1, 6, and 20 of a Superseding Indictment, which charged in count 1, violations of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341, and 2 (Mail Fraud); in count 6, violations of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1957 and 2 (Money Laundering); and, in count 20, violations of Title 42, United States Code, Section 7413(c)(1) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2 (Environmental Clean Air Act Violation).

According to facts stipulated to by **COHN** and the Government at the time of his guilty pleas, **COHN** submitted false and sham invoices to School District 189 purportedly for environmental clean-up work at the Clark Middle School site. **COHN** then caused the endorsements of environmental companies to be forged on checks issued from the escrow account, and used the moneys for personal expenses. **COHN** obtained approximately \$350,000 from the escrow account through his criminal conduct. As part of his plea agreement, **COHN** agreed to make full restitution to School District 189. As to the environmental clean air act charge, **COHN** failed to remove substantial quantities of known asbestos containing materials from the historic Spivey Building, the tallest building in East St. Louis, before sending work crews into the Spivey Building to conduct demolition and renovation work.

"The defendant's illegal actions risked exposing the public to potentially deadly asbestos. They also cost taxpayers considerable money," said Thomas V. Skinner, EPA's Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "This sentence demonstrates our resolve to take action against those who knowingly break environmental laws and defraud the public."

The successful prosecution was the result of an investigation conducted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Criminal Investigation Division; United States Postal Inspection Service; Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation; United States Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Attorney General's Office, and the Illinois State Police. The prosecution was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Hal Goldsmith.